

## Rethinking regions in turbulent times

Bailey, David; Clark, Jennifer; De Propriis, Lisa; Colombelli, Alessandra; Corradini, Carlo; Derudder, Ben ; Fratesi, Ugo; Fritsch, Michael; Harrison, John; Hatfield, Madeleine; Kemeny, Tom ; Kogler, Dieter ; Lagendijk, Arnoud; Lawton, Philip; Ortega Argiles, Raquel; Usai, Stefano

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2019.1698837>

### *Document Version*

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

### *Citation for published version (Harvard):*

Bailey, D, Clark, J, De Propriis, L, Colombelli, A, Corradini, C, Derudder, B, Fratesi, U, Fritsch, M, Harrison, J, Hatfield, M, Kemeny, T, Kogler, D, Lagendijk, A, Lawton, P, Ortega Argiles, R & Usai, S 2019, 'Rethinking regions in turbulent times', *Regional Studies*, vol. 54, no. 1, 1, pp. 1-4.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2019.1698837>

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To cite this article: David Bailey, Jennifer Clark, Alessandra Colombelli, Carlo Corradini, Lisa De Propriis, Ben Derudder, Ugo Fratesi, Michael Fritsch, John Harrison, Madeleine Hatfield, Tom Kemeny, Dieter Kogler, Arnoud Lagendijk, Philip Lawton, Raquel Ortega-Argilés & Stefano Usai (2020) Rethinking regions in turbulent times, *Regional Studies*, 54:1, 1-4, DOI: [10.1080/00343404.2019.1698837](https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2019.1698837)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2019.1698837>



Published online: 19 Dec 2019.



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EDITORIAL



## Rethinking regions in turbulent times

David Bailey , Jennifer Clark , Alessandra Colombelli , Carlo Corradini ,  
Lisa De Propriis, Ben Derudder , Ugo Fratesi , Michael Fritsch , John Harrison ,  
Madeleine Hatfield , Tom Kemeny , Dieter Kogler , Arnoud Lagendijk ,  
Philip Lawton , Raquel Ortega-Argilés  and Stefano Usai 

We live in turbulent times, but when has this not been the case? The history of regions and the 'regional studies project' has always had at its core concerns relating to new and increased social and spatial inequalities resulting from economic and political change. Whatever change has occurred to cause this turbulence, some people and places have taken advantage and raced ahead, while others were disadvantaged and left behind. The difference today is that the stakes are higher, with more people and more places exposed and being impacted than ever before. There is also increased recognition that the region is a central context for these developments, a pivot in a world under much duress. As we begin the new decade, the 2020 volume of *Regional Studies* opens at yet another key point in history and in regional studies.

### LOOKING AHEAD: REGIONAL STUDIES IN THE 2020s

Today, regional research is yet again spearheading efforts to provide the reliable, robust knowledge that we need to address problems of widening disparities in economic and social outcomes between people and places and to meet major spatial environmental challenges (housing, congestion, climate, energy, etc.). In order to find innovative solutions to wicked problems, it is critical to ask fundamental questions about how we do regional research:

- Do our existing theories and concepts adequately explain present instabilities and new realities, or do we need to rethink our analytical frameworks in the new tumultuous reality?
- Do existing policies and frameworks help (or hinder) cities and regions, or are there alternatives that we should be promoting?
- More fundamentally, are we asking the right questions and looking in the right places to find innovative solutions that enable a more spatially balanced, sustainable and inclusive model of economic growth and political stability?

*Regional Studies* will continue to be a place to discuss and debate these important issues, to establish the need

and nature of future research imperatives in the field, and to address the concerns and challenges confronting practitioners and policy-makers. We welcome a wide range of papers across regional studies, and are pleased to see new papers published on some of the key topics under debate in the journal. This includes the places left behind explored through the spatiality of 'discontent' and its relationship to politics, inequality and populism (e.g., Dijkstra, Poelman, & Rodríguez-Pose, 2019; McCann, 2019; and see also Huggins, 2018); as well as those people left behind by austerity (e.g., MacLeavy & Manley, 2018). Analysis of the financial crisis of course remains an important area of continuing research, one recent contribution to this being Donald and Gray's (2019) consideration of 'the double crisis'. Last year's virtual special issue also highlighted how the 'infrastructure turn' is bringing new interdisciplinary enquiry to bear on the ways in which infrastructure shapes urban and regional spaces (Glass, Addie, & Nelles, 2019); while Schindler and Kanai (2019) consider the impact of infrastructure-led development with a focus on 'getting the territory right'.

### HOW YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE TO REGIONAL STUDIES

*Regional Studies*, as a leading international journal covering the development of theories and concepts, empirical analysis and policy debate in the field of regional studies, is at the forefront of research on these contemporary challenges. The journal publishes original research spanning the economic, social, political and environmental dimensions of urban and regional (subnational) change, which allow an interdisciplinary perspective to be brought to bear on today's key themes.

In this vein, the distinctive purpose of *Regional Studies* is to connect insights across intellectual disciplines in a systematic and grounded way in order to understand how and why regions and cities evolve (see also Axinte, Mehmood, Marsden, & Roep, 2019). It also publishes research that distils how economic and political processes and outcomes are contingent upon regional and local circumstances.

### CONTACT

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Regular authors will be pleased to know that the journal has now relaxed its page limit restrictions. The word limit no longer includes an allowance for tables and figures so the text alone can extend to 8000 words. Tables and figures in the main text should still only be included where they are needed to support a paper's argument, but authors can use appendices in the supplemental data online to provide readers with more detailed data, including making their data sets available for reuse.

The journal is a pluralist forum, which showcases diverse perspectives and analytical techniques. Many papers published in the journal draw on leading quantitative research, including social network analysis (Derudder & Taylor, 2018; Martinus & Sigler, 2018), agent-based modelling (Pyka, Kudic, & Müller, 2019; Sebestyén & Varga, 2019), spatial econometrics (Ezcurra & Rios, 2019; Hortas-Rico & Rios, 2019), and panel data estimations (Cantner et al., 2019; Castellacci et al., 2019). Furthermore, novel methods from data science and big data analytics increasingly offer new opportunities as well as challenges, both theoretical and empirical, that may help answer complex questions and ask new ones within regional and subregional research.

At the same time, *Regional Studies* is equally a home for cutting-edge qualitative research, and the editors would like to encourage submissions from authors using qualitative empirical material. Indeed, recent papers have demonstrated the depth and breadth of the contributions brought by qualitative approaches. Examples include: Jones (2019) on city governance and climate change; Aranguren, Magro, Navarro, and Wilson (2019) on smart specialization and specifically the Europe Commission's RIS3 (Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation) agenda; Gherhes, Brooks, and Vorley (2019) on localism and enterprise policy; and Vallance, Tewdwr-Jones, and Kempton (2019) on complex forms of territorial governance.

Although case study evidence for single regions may provide important insights (e.g., Beel, Jones, & Plows, 2019; Bellandi & Santini, 2019; Liu, Lattemann, Xing, & Dorawa, 2019), the specific character and the relevance of regional conditions can often be more convincingly demonstrated in an interregional comparison (see also Morrison & Doussineau, 2019). *Regional Studies* also welcomes research based on regions throughout the world, and recent contributions have included a focus on China (e.g., Liu, 2019; Zhang & Ji, 2019), Rwanda (e.g., Nilsson, 2019), Japan (e.g., Okamuro, Nishimura, & Kitagawa, 2019), the United States (e.g., Eisenburger, Doussard, Wolf-Powers, Schrock, & Marotta, 2019), Canada (e.g., Brydges & Hracs, 2019) and Europe (e.g., Ezcurra & Rios, 2019), as well as cross-country comparison (e.g., Jones, 2019).

It should be stressed that *Regional Studies* retains its primary focus on subnational regions, demonstrating the continuing – if not expanding – relevance of the regional and local even when it comes to topics of national and international significance. To this end, it welcomes more submissions on the big topics emerging at the regional level, including climate change (e.g., Jones, 2019), inequality (e.g., Mussida & Parisi, 2019), Industry 4.0 (e.g., De Propriis & Storai, 2019; Liu et al., 2019), big data (e.g., Marmolejo-Duarte & Cerda-Troncoso, 2019), migration (e.g., Bettin,

Bianchi, Nicolli, Ramaciotti, & Rizzo, 2019), gender (e.g., von Berlepsch, Rodríguez-Pose, & Lee, 2019), trade and competition (e.g., de Matteis, Pietrovito, & Franco Pozzolo, 2019), and policy implications (e.g., Billing, McCann, & Ortega-Argilés, 2019; Gherhes et al., 2019).

As well as regular paper submissions, which are generally expected to have both a theoretical and an empirical contribution to the field, *Regional Studies* also publishes two special paper types: Policy Debates and Urban and Regional Horizons. Policy Debates is an interdisciplinary forum for the analysis of policy and practice issues in regional, local and urban development. It connects academic and practitioner communities by exploring the interface between academic debates and policy design, implementation and results. The journal seeks to publish papers that engage with major strands of contemporary policy thinking and that improve understanding of how and why policies do (or do not) work. Policy Debates should be relevant, providing practical insights into the policy context, including how policies work and the lessons that can be drawn from them; novel, offering new approaches, perspectives or understanding; analytical, exploring and explaining key policy issues; accessible, encouraging and opening debates within an interdisciplinary and international audience; and stimulating, prompting new thinking on existing or emerging policy debates. Recent examples include McCann (2019) on 'Perceptions of regional inequality and the geography of discontent'; Medeiros and Rauhut (2019) on 'Territorial cohesion cities'; Miao and MacLennan (2019) on 'The rhetoric–reality gap of cities' success'; and Beel et al. (2019) on 'Urban growth strategies in rural regions'.

Urban and Regional Horizons is a periodic section dedicated to agenda-setting work designed to stimulate new thinking and novel approaches to addressing big intellectual questions, issues and challenges in regional studies. The focus on 'horizons' ensures these papers reflect past theoretical and empirical research before identifying fruitful new fields of enquiry and conceptual/methodological approaches. Papers are expected to be ambitious and challenging while being accessible to a broad audience (Harrison, 2014). Recent contributions to the section have focused on taking evolutionary economic geography historical (Henning, 2019), promoting new regional economic growth models focused more on issues of inequality and climate change (Donald & Gray, 2019), urbanization and the deployment of global infrastructure (Wiig & Silver, 2019), and replacing services as an economic sector with urbanization and control (Schafraan, McDonald, Lopez Morales, Akyelken, & Acuto, 2018). Alongside this, a recent intervention piece explores how to push the field of regional studies beyond its present institutional, conceptual and methodological borders from five perspectives that cross a range of topics prominent in the journal: innovation and competitiveness, globalization and urbanization, social and environmental justice, local and regional development, and industrial policy (Harrison et al., 2019). Topics and themes prominent in *Regional Studies* that we would particularly welcome new contributions to the Urban and Regional Horizons section include migration, democracy and governance, technology, Industry 4.0, artificial intelligence and financialization.

Another way of becoming involved in *Regional Studies* is through special issues. The journal welcomes special issue proposals that engage with, and advance, theory and research related to the journal's aims and scope. There is more guidance on how to submit a proposal on the journal's homepage. Also on the homepage are the latest calls for papers for special issues, so please check regularly for calls in your area of research and get in touch with the guest editors if you are interested in being part of these collections. All this information is now collated under a new special issues tab on the journal homepage to make it easier to find.

Recent special issues demonstrate the breadth of topics being considered from a regional perspective, including European Union Cohesion Policy and Brexit (Crescenzi, Fratesi, & Monastiriotis, 2019), the evolution and co-evolution of regional innovation activities (Fritsch, Kudic, & Pyka, 2019), communities on the move (Parrilli, Montresor, & Tripp, 2019), and innovation and geographical spillovers (Segarra-Blasco, Arauzo-Carod, & Teruel, 2018).

Throughout the year, the 2020 volume will also feature more special issues on key topics, including the new financial geographies of Asia (Lai, Pan, Sokol, & Wójcik, 2019); mobility, housing and the labour market; the competitive advantage of regions; decentralization after the Great Recession; and smart specialization – so watch this space!

## SUPPORTING REGIONAL STUDIES

*Regional Studies* is in good health, with an increasing number of submissions, a large number of papers and pages published in each volume, and a strong impact factor. Through hard work and the support of many anonymous referees, the editorial team has managed to reduce the turnaround times on manuscripts and the time taken for papers to appear online once they have been accepted.

The journal in particular acknowledges its debt to the many referees who provide invaluable peer-review reports on submissions every year. The 2019 best referee awards (for reviews in 2018) went to Juan Carlos Leiva (Costa Rican Institute of Technology), Silvia Rocchetta (Dublin City University, Ireland) and James Wilson (Orkestra-Basque Institute of Competitiveness, Spain).

The current editorial team seeks to maintain the successful policies and practices of previous teams. These include a commitment to publish the highest quality research, encourage diversity, ensure ethical integrity, provide constructive feedback to authors, share decision-making among editors, commission special issues, and support special sessions in international conferences.

Our goal is to maintain and develop the journal as an innovative and lively forum for discussing the most significant ideas and knowledge about cities and regions, and to be accessible to as wide an audience as possible.

Last but not least, we need to note that editing *Regional Studies* is very much a collective endeavour. We express our heartfelt thanks to the Publishing Committee of the Regional Studies Association, and especially Andrew Beer and Sally Hardy, as well as colleagues at Taylor & Francis, including Sarah Bird, Jessica Vivian and Carolyn Haynes,

the journal's editorial assistant, Sarah Hands, and many others involved in the journal's editing, production and dissemination. The usual disclaimers, as always, apply.

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